



For Immediate Release

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Thursday, December 7, 2006

## ***ENZI APPLAUDS CONGRESSIONAL PASSAGE OF THE COMBATING AUTISM ACT***

**Washington, D.C.** - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today praised the Senate and the House of Representatives for passing the "Combating Autism Act," S. 843, a bill he said is "an important victory for improving the lives of persons with autism and families affected by autism." The bill now awaits President Bush's signature.

"With up to 1 in 166 children being diagnosed with autism in the United States, it is vital that we improve our understanding of the causes, symptoms, interventions, and supports and services available for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)," Enzi said. "We must also ensure that there are effective programs in place to meet the diverse needs of persons with autism and their families, and that these programs work in close coordination with one another."

ASD is usually defined as a developmental disorder that begins in children before the age of three and typically delays their social interaction and communication skills.

S. 843 will expand research at National Institutes of Health (NIH) with regard to the possible causes and potential interventions for people living with autism, increase autism awareness through Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and coordinate health, education, and disability programs for persons diagnosed with ASD and other developmental disabilities. The bill passed both the Senate and House unanimously.

"I want to express my deep appreciation and thanks to the original cosponsors of the bill, Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), for introducing this legislation and for working with me to get it passed," Enzi said. "I would also like to thank Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), the Committee's Ranking Member, Congressman Joe Barton (R-TX), Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Congresswoman Mary Bono (R-CA), and Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO) for their hard work in pushing this vital bill forward."

“I also want to thank the various groups and individuals who work on behalf of individuals and families affected by ASD and other developmental disabilities,” Enzi added. “I appreciate the way in which this community of advocates came together to work with me and my colleagues as we worked to put this bill together.”

**Key provisions of the bill include:**

- Developing and implementing a strategic plan for research related to autism spectrum disorders;
- Reauthorizing Autism Centers of Excellence and providing funds to the centers for coordination of services and information for patients;
- Supporting basic and clinical research into the fields of developmental neurobiology, genetics, epigenetics, pharmacology, nutrition, immunology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, psychopharmacology, and toxicology;
- Improving coordination of the various federal, State, and local supports and services available to persons with autism and families affected by autism;
- Increasing the number of providers that can screen, diagnosis and provide interventions to persons with autism; and,
- Promoting research to determine evidence-based best practices for diagnosis, early detection, prevention, intervention and possible/potential cure for autism spectrum disorders.

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